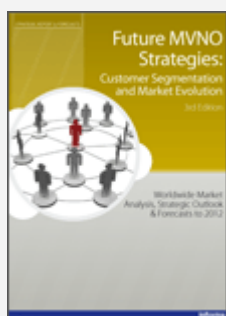


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Future Group To Foray Into MVNO Business – India

Future Group, the retail chain operator in India, aims to capture the rapidly growing Indian mobile services market by offering MVNO services as early as in 2009. The company is understood to be keen on becoming a franchisee of mobile network operators as it does not own any service provider license or spectrum to start its own services. Kishore Biyani, Chief Executive Officer of Future Group, said: "We are not in a hurry. We have just begun talking with some network operators. We are looking at all consumer segments for growth in our business and mobile is one of the segments we are looking at. The idea is to allow customers to pay less for airtime as it has become a grocery item such as rice or sugar. We plan to offer free outgoing calls to customers who buy food, groceries, clothes and mobile handsets from our stores."



According to reports, the company has appointed McKinsey and Co. and UK's Value Partners Group Ltd. to advise them on this foray. Future Group has earmarked INR 100 crore (USD 23.6 million) for investment in this venture and has initiated talks with various network providers. Recently, Virgin Mobile entered into a similar agreement with a leading CDMA operator in India owned by the Tata Group.

Qualcomm To Launch Health Care MVNO – USA

Qualcomm is planning to launch a health care MVNO called 'LifeComm' in the market, and has appointed a new Chief Executive Officer who is expected to join next month. The company is expected to provide details of the new venture and its offerings during that time. Paul Jacobs, Chief Executive Officer of Qualcomm, stated that the company has been working towards establishing LifeComm since 2005. The launch has been delayed as Qualcomm did not want to compete with other carriers by remaining the main investor in the MVNO. Jacobs, however, said that the ownership structure has now been settled.



Don Jones, Vice President of Business Development for Qualcomm Wireless Life Sciences, in an interview said that LifeComm will provide a range of health care-related services in addition to providing mobile phone services. He said: "We built the model to start with phones that consumers will want to pay for, but we expect over a short time there will be self-insured employers who will subsidize them. Employers can see the value of good health for their employees, as well as a way to reduce their health care costs". He further added by saying that LifeComm will follow Research in Motion's business model for mobile e-mail by identifying a market need and creating hardware and software to solve that need.

Lebara Mobile Signs Distribution Deal With Morrisons – UK

Lebara Mobile, a UK-based ethnic market MVNO, has entered into an agreement with Wm Morrison Supermarkets PLC, the leading supermarket chain, for the sale of its airtime from 375 Morrisons stores and petrol forecourts throughout the UK. The initial store implementation will take place from August 4th to 14th, 2008, with petrol forecourts to follow later in 2008.



Commenting on the agreement, Robert Gaskin, UK Country Manager of Lebara Mobile, said: "Morrisons' strategy of always giving its customers the very best value for money wherever they live ties in perfectly with our philosophy of giving customers the best value rates wherever and whenever they call. In a time when household bills are rising, Morrisons' customers around the UK can take comfort in the fact that with Lebara Mobile they can still stay in touch with friends and loved ones with low-cost national and international calls". Lebara Mobile operates in seven countries, namely Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK and has more than 700,000 subscribers.

Mfonex To Launch MVNO Services – UK, India

Mfonex, which provides mobile, landline, broadband and credit check services, is planning to launch its MVNO network 'Topaz Mobile' in the later half of 2008. The company has finalized plans to launch the network in India.

Recently, Mfonex acquired two Cleckheaton-based firms Insight Marketing and Inspire Telecom to further expand its brand and marketing capabilities for an undisclosed amount. Commenting on the acquisition, Chris Caudle, Chairman of Mfonex, said: "By acquiring these businesses we are looking to expand and improve our product range by combining their infrastructure and facilities with our knowledge and expertise". Jamie Greaves, Founder of Inspire Telecom, said: "Being part of Mfonex gives me further confidence and support to develop the Inspire Telecom service to the Mfonex client base". A spokesperson for Insight Marketing, said: "This is a great opportunity to further establish ourselves as a logistics and telemarketing company, and we are delighted to be working with Mfonex". Mfonex is also shifting its head office from Oxfordshire to West Yorkshire in the UK.



Ikea Signs T-Mobile For MVNO Services – UK

The UK arm of Ikea, the Swedish home furnishing chain, has partnered with T-Mobile to launch SIM-only MVNO services in the UK. The service, named as Family Mobile, will be available to approximately 1.4 million Ikea loyalty card holders from August 8, 2008.



If you have an MVNO news story which you think should be covered by this service then e-mail your press release to news@mvndirectory.com.

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Commenting on the agreement, Jim Hyde, Chief Executive Officer of T-Mobile UK, said: "We're delighted to have been chosen as the network behind the new Ikea mobile service. Our long experiences in delivering white label services to MVNO partners and the independently assessed superiority of our network will ensure Ikea realises its ambitions to offer an exceptional value prepay service to members of its loyalty programme".

The service targeted towards families offers multiple SIM cards per account, allowing credit to be shared among different lines. Ikea claims its SIM card package is one of the lowest priced pay-as-you-go service in the UK. The service will not attract any fixed monthly payments or any minimum spend cap beyond an initial top up of GBP 10 (USD 19.7). Jason Baker, CRM Manager at Ikea, said: "In the current climate, where every penny counts, Ikea is offering another benefit to our loyal customers. You can't control the rising costs of petrol, utility bills or food but by being at least 25% cheaper than any other comparable prepay offer, Family Mobile can help customers take control of your mobile phone costs". The company will not sell mobile phones; however, members will be able to purchase low-cost mobile phones through Mobile Partners UK Ltd.

Tele2 Mobile To Reach 500,000 Subscribers Soon – France

Tele2 Mobile, a French MVNO, has announced that it is close on the heels of breaking the 500,000 subscriber mark within three years of its launch. The company, which started its MVNO services in June 2005, is the second largest MVNO in France behind Virgin Mobile. Tele2 Mobile had 465,000 registered subscribers at the end of June 2008, as compared to 450,000 in March 2008. The company also reported total revenues and net income of EUR 1 billion (USD 1.55 billion) and EUR 12 million (USD 18.6 million), respectively, for Q2 ended June 30, 2008.



ZON Multimedia Partners With Vodafone For MVNO – Portugal

The cable television unit of ZON Multimedia, a leading Portuguese telecommunications firm, has entered into a five-year agreement with Vodafone's Portugal unit to launch its MVNO operations in the country. It is understood that negotiations between the two companies were going on since May 2008. Currently, CTT, a Portuguese postal company, is the sole MVNO operator in the country, and utilizes the infrastructure of TMN, the mobile telecommunications unit of Portugal Telecom.



ZON also plans to launch its own branded mobile service including mobile broadband and voice services in Q4 2008. Further, Sonaecom, a telecommunication provider which owns mobile operator Optimus, also revealed its plan of launching MVNO operations. However, the company did not provide the exact timelines for the launch of its service offerings.

Lycamobile Mulls Orange Network For MVNO Operations – UK

Lycamobile, an ethnic market MVNO subsidiary of Lycatel, is expected to enter into an agreement with Orange to launch its MVNO operations in the UK. In one of our previous issues, we mentioned that Lycamobile was searching for a network partner to launch its MVNO operations in the country. According to sources, the company was expected to sign a pact with its Holland partner, T-Mobile, in the UK also. However, the relationship between the two soured over SIM card allocations in Holland. Commenting on the situation, a T-Mobile UK spokesperson said: "There is no intent to form a relationship with Lycamobile". Further, Lycamobile also held discussions with O2; however, O2 is understood to remain reserved about the new venture.



The ethnic mobile market in the UK is estimated at approximately eight million. Milind Kangle, Chief Executive Officer of Lycamobile, expects to capture 60% share and add 750,000 subscribers within a year of its operations. Lycamobile has already signed a distribution agreement with Dextra and claims to have a channel of 150,000 outlets for the selling of its SIM cards in the UK. The total UK wholesale market is estimated at GBP 1 billion (USD 1.98 billion) which is further expected to grow to GBP 2 billion (USD 3.9 billion) by 2012. T-Mobile, Vodafone and O2 capture approximately 60%, 17%, and 17%, respectively, of this market. Orange, which works with IDT Mobile and ad-funded MVNO Bylk, lags behind and is understood to be very keen on a wholesale venture. Meanwhile Nowtel, a leading calling card company, is also planning its own UK MVNO bid.